

Administration of Barack Obama, 2016

**The President's News Conference With Chancellor Angela Merkel of
Germany in Hannover, Germany**

April 24, 2016

Chancellor Merkel. Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to bid a very warm welcome to the President of the United States of America, Barack Obama, here to Germany on this fifth visit, this time to Hannover. And let me tell you that I am delighted to have an opportunity not only to continue our talks, but today is going to be very remarkable day, because we're going to open the Hannover fair together. And the United States of America, this year will be the—or are the partner country.

These are turbulent times. I think we would both agree. And we have an opportunity to talk about the whole spectrum of international issues. Our bilateral relations are excellent. We don't need to spend too much time on this.

But let me tell you, Barack, that I very much value our candid, open talks that are always based on mutual trust. And we talk about the whole range of issues, and we do so today, as we have done many times previously, and I hope and trust that we shall continue to do so.

We used all of these opportunities here to—we used this opportunity here to talk about, as I said, the broader spectrum of international issues, for example, combating terrorism, tackling the root causes of flight, and also the peace process, but also questions on—related to migration in general.

In many ways, the European Union is a target for those—or a destination, rather, for those refugees that do not enjoy peace and freedom at home. So Syria loomed large on our agenda. We, together, support the political process that has to be brought forward. We support the Geneva talks. And I am greatly concerned that the cease-fire did not hold these—and hasn't held over these past few days and that there are outbreaks of fights in Aleppo and other places.

I was able to see yesterday along the border with Syria and Turkey what this means by way of suffering, of distress, of want, for people when there is fighting in their home area. So we want to do everything in order to bring the Geneva talks to a successful outcome.

We also talked about Libya, because here it's going to be very important to sustain—support the unity Government there, even though, obviously, it's a very fragile one. We have a very—this, too, is an entanglement of, on the one hand, stability, the problems that we have in—with this new unity—that this new unity Government has to restabilize the situation, but also when we look at Syria, for example, there are enormous migratory flows across the Aegean Sea that are triggered by other developments there.

I am very grateful that the United States of America are supporting the NATO mission in the Aegean. You're going to continue to do so, I understand. And this in many ways is also a joint European-American effort, a transatlantic mission, and we were at one in saying that all of the security issues on the very doorstep of Europe actually can only be solved, can only be tackled by joint transatlantic efforts. And only in this way can our common security be ensured.

But this also means—and here we were also in agreement—that a European agreement is necessary, a German agreement is necessary in many of these issues. And I think Germany over the past few months has demonstrated that we are willing to make this additional effort, to

go the extra mile, be it in Iraq fighting terrorism, be it in—on the Syrian issue, be it, for example, in the way that we have become engaged in the mission in Mali and in many other places where we have taken—where we are on missions.

We talked about Afghanistan, and Afghanistan, too, needs to be kept on a track which is promising for the Afghani people. We are ready and willing to be militarily engaged, to continue to be militarily engaged. We're grateful to the United States of America for the very great responsibility that you are willing to continue to shoulder. And I think the message to the Taliban needs to be, the international community will not leave Afghanistan in its current predicament.

We then, last but not least, also talked about an issue where we are also interested in and where the United States also participate in the Normandy format, namely the solution of the crisis in Ukraine. We stand by the Minsk agreement. We attach the greatest possible importance to these—this agreement being implemented as quickly as possible. We will put a lot of efforts into making this possible in our talks with Ukraine, but also in our talks with Russia. Unfortunately, we still don't have a stable cease-fire. We need to bring the political process forward. And the next few steps we've also discussed very thoroughly.

Tonight economic issues will loom large on the agenda, which is why I don't want to go into the issue of the free trade agreement right now. We will have an opportunity to do so later on. But from a European perspective, let me say this very clearly. It is very helpful in order to allow our economy in Europe to grow. It's important for the German economy; it's important for the whole of the European economy. And if I look at the progress that was made with the transatlantic—the TPP—the Trans-Pacific agreement, I think we all ought to have an interest in speeding matters up. And I hope and trust that the American President will continue to support these negotiations. We should do our bit in order to make this a success.

So thank you very much, again, for this visit. And I'm very much looking forward to, well, the other things that are sort of lining up for us today and tomorrow. And I'd like to welcome you on behalf of the German citizens, on behalf of the citizens of Hannover.

President Obama. Well, let me say thank you to Chancellor Merkel for your welcome. It is wonderful to be back in Germany. I believe I'm the first U.S. President to visit and spend time here in Hannover, and our magnificent surroundings reflect the history and beauty of this city.

It is always a great pleasure to be back with my friend and partner, Angela. I have valued Chancellor Merkel's thinking and perspective on a whole range of global issues throughout my Presidency. You have been a trusted partner throughout my entire Presidency—longer than any world leader—and I value your judgment. I thank you for your commitment to our alliance and to the values and human rights for which we stand. And I'm grateful for our personal friendship.

I'm here, at Angela's invitation, for the Hannover Messe trade show. Angela and I will join the opening ceremonies this evening and visit some exhibitions tomorrow. And it's a reminder that the United States and Germany are each other's—among each other's largest trading partners. It's a relationship we have to keep building and nurturing so that we're creating more jobs and more prosperity for our people and keeping our countries competitive in the global economy.

In that regard, Angela and I agree that the United States and the European Union need to keep moving forward with the Transatlantic Trade Investment Partnership negotiations, which we'll discuss more this evening.

In our bilateral meeting, we discussed the importance of boosting economic growth in the euro zone, which is critical to the global economy, including the U.S. economy. Strong growth in Europe is particularly important given the array of pressing challenges, whether its security, defense, migration, or refugees.

I should add, by the way, that given the urgency of climate change—and the economic opportunities of clean energy—both of our nations have signed the Paris climate change agreement, and we agree that it needs to be implemented quickly. And we also agree, the world has to make concrete progress this year to phase down dangerous hydrofluorocarbons.

Of course, most of our discussion, as Chancellor Merkel indicated, focused on urgent security challenges. Germany is a vital member of the coalition to destroy ISIL. German aircraft support the air campaign, and German personnel in Iraq are training local forces. German assistance is helping Iraq stabilize and rebuild the areas it liberates from ISIL. And our coalition continues to make progress. Today we discussed additional steps that NATO could take to support the campaign, as well as economic assistance to Iraq that the G-7 could pledge at next month's summit in Japan.

Germany is obviously a strong partner in international efforts to provide humanitarian relief to the people of Syria and Iraq. We remain deeply concerned about the upsurge in fighting in Syria over the last several days, and we continue to agree that the only real, durable solution is a political solution that moves Syria towards an inclusive government that represents all Syrians.

Given the horrific attacks that we've seen around the world—including Paris, Brussels, Istanbul, San Bernardino in California, and on a much more frequent basis, attacks and horrific violence that's taking place in the Middle East—we discussed the importance of maintaining our strong security cooperation.

In Afghanistan, we'll continue to help strengthen Afghan forces as they push back against Al Qaida, the Taliban, and ISIL. We'll continue to support the Libyan people and the new Libyan Government as it seeks to extend security across its country.

We agreed that the United States and Germany are going to remain very strong counterterrorism and intelligence partners, and we're committed to using all the tools at our disposal to prevent terrorists from traveling and plotting attacks. And that includes improved information sharing between our countries and within Europe. And as always, we'll do so while upholding our values and civil liberties, including the privacy of citizens here and in the United States.

I want to once again commend Angela for her courageous leadership as Germany and Europe respond to migrants who are desperately fleeing the Syrian conflict and conflicts elsewhere in the region. Perhaps because she once lived behind a wall herself, Angela understands the aspirations of those who have been denied their freedom and who seek a better life. And I know the politics around this issue can be difficult in all of our countries. We did discuss the EU's recent agreement with Turkey, and Angela and I agree that our nations can respond to this challenge in a way that is both humane and ensures our security.

And finally, as we look ahead to this summer's NATO summit in Warsaw, we discussed the importance of keeping the Alliance strong with the investments needed for our collective defense.

We continue to augment, on a rotational basis, NATO forces in Eastern Europe, including the Baltic States. As I've said from the very beginning of my Presidency, we have a treaty obligation to defend every NATO ally, and we will.

Beyond the alliance, we welcome the formation of a new government in Ukraine, which we encourage to continue the political, economic and energy reforms that can deliver progress for the Ukrainian people. Chancellor Merkel, along with President Hollande, have been tireless in pursuit of a peaceful and durable solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine. And we agree that all sides need to uphold the commitments they've made and that sanctions on Russia can and should only be lifted once Russia fully complies with its commitments under the Minsk agreement.

Tomorrow, Chancellor Merkel will host our meeting with Prime Ministers Cameron, President Hollande, Prime Minister Renzi, as we discuss the full range of challenges that we face together. And it will be another reminder of how grateful I am for Angela's partnership, and how much the United States values our enduring transatlantic alliance, including with Germany.

So vielen dank, Chancellor Merkel.

[At this point, German Government Spokesperson Steffen Seibert introduced White House Press Secretary Joshua R. Earnest in German, and no translation was provided. He concluded in English as follows.]

Mr. Seibert. Josh, please.

Press Secretary Earnest. The first question will come from Roberta Rampton with Reuters.

Trade/Trans-Pacific Partnership/Syria

Q. Thank you. President Obama, you've made the case many times that T-TIP and the TPP with Asia are modern trade agreements that, kind of, deal with some of the problems or issues that arose with earlier deals. But that message doesn't seem to have resonated. The deals are very unpopular at home, and there were huge protests here yesterday over the T-TIP. And of course, it's a huge Presidential issue—Presidential election issue. So what's your plan to realistically advance the deals? Is it realistic to say you want to get T-TIP done by the end of the year? And at this point, realistically, will TPP, which is at the front of the queue, of course, have to wait for congressional approval until the lame duck session at the earliest at the end of the year?

And, Chancellor Merkel, you said yesterday in Turkey that you favor the creation of a type of safe zone in Syria. And President Obama has said in the past that he opposes these types of zones because, while they're well intentioned, they could require—they would require military force to—on the ground to protect the safety of the people. And I'm wondering whether you're going to try to convince President Obama to rethink his position on these types of safe zones and how you would see them working in terms of enforcing safety on the ground.

Thank you.

President Obama. With respect to trade, I think what you're seeing around the world is, people are unsettled by globalization. And although trade has brought enormous benefits to many of our countries that have been engaged in trade, although, typically, jobs that are produced from exports have higher wages and better benefits than those that are not involved

with the export market, people visibly see a plant moving and jobs lost, and the narrative develops that this is weakening, rather than strengthening, the position of ordinary people and ordinary workers, and it's forcing them to compete with low-wage labor. And that, I think, is what drives a lot of suspicion, understandably, of these trade deals. The benefits oftentimes are diffuse, whereas a particular plant or business that feels it's been hurt by outside competition feels it very acutely.

But if you look at the benefits to the United States or to Germany of free trade around the world, it is indisputable that it has made our economies stronger. It has made sure that our businesses are the most competitive in the world. And as you see other markets like China beginning to develop and Asia beginning to develop and Africa growing fast, we've got to make sure that our businesses can compete there. Because, at least in the United States, 95 percent of the world's markets are outside of our borders, and if we're not there, present, we're going to have problems.

Now, the relationship between Europe and the United States is already one of the most robust trading relationships in the world. But what we've discovered is, is that while strengthening labor provisions and strengthening environmental provisions and standards, we can also eliminate a lot of regulatory and bureaucratic irritants and blockages to trade that would allow us to engage in even more trade, sell more goods, create more jobs, and create more prosperity.

Now, with respect to the politics of it, recent surveys in the United States, for example, showed that, actually, the majority of people still favor trade. They still recognize, on balance, that it's a good idea.

During Presidential elections, it's always tough. When we're in the heat of campaigns, people naturally are going to worry more about what's lost than what's gained with respect to trade agreements. But I am confident that we're going to be able to get this done. Keep in mind, there were people who didn't think that with Trans-Pacific Partnership that we would ever be able to give me the authority to actually move it forward, and we got it done. People didn't think we were going to be able to negotiate with 11 countries in the Asia-Pacific and have a deal that, in fact, does strengthen labor and does strengthen environmental provisions, and yet we got it done. And I think the same is going to be true here.

I don't anticipate that we will be able to have completed ratification of a deal by the end of the year, but I do anticipate that we can have completed the agreement. And then, it will be presented to our various legislatures, our various parliaments. But at that point, we will have the negotiations completed and people will be able to see exactly why this would be good for our two countries.

And with respect to Congress and Trans-Pacific Partnership, I think after the primary season is over the politics settle down a little bit in Congress, and we'll be in a position to start moving forward. Because I know that we have had a majority of Members in the past who were in favor of this deal. Otherwise, we wouldn't have gotten the authority for me to go ahead and fast-track this agreement. But I think we all know that elections can sometimes make things a little more challenging, and people take positions, in part, to protect themselves from attacks during the course of election season.

One thing I do want to say with respect to Syria: We all care deeply about the tragic humanitarian crisis inside of Syria. I live with this every day. I read about it every day. We talk to people who are experiencing suffering or have witnessed the suffering that's going on there.

We are in constant communications with Turkey, our NATO ally, in finding ways in which we can resolve this situation. I—as you know, I spoke to President Putin early last week to try to make sure that we could reinstate the cessation of hostilities and make sure that the political process does not unwind.

But having said all that, the issue surrounding a safe zone in Syrian territory is not a matter of an ideological objection on my part. It's not a matter of me not wishing I could help and protect a whole bunch of people. It's a very practical issue about, how do you do it? And who is going to put on a bunch of ground troops inside of Syria? And how do you let people in? And who do you let in, and who do you let out? And how is it monitored?

And the truth of the matter is, is that when I go through with my Defense Department—and we've done it multiple times—how a proposal like that might work, as a practical matter, sadly, it is very difficult to see how it would operate short of us essentially being willing to militarily take over a big chunk of that country. And that requires a big military commitment.

And I think that one of the biggest challenges that Angela and I both face is, is that we oftentimes see great wrongs taking place around the world, and we do everything that we can to try to right them, but one of the things I've learned as President is, we have to make sure that whatever it is that we say we're going to do we can deliver. And creating a situation in which we could actually protect all the people inside of Syria, the best bet for doing that is to get this political process on track, a transition on track, so that all the parties can safely lay down their arms and create the kind of inclusive, representational government that Syria so desperately needs.

Chancellor Merkel. I think if you actually follow closely my remarks yesterday in Turkey, you will be able to understand that this is something that I think needs to come out of this Geneva process. It's not something that can be called a safe zone in a traditional way. But when we talk about a cease-fire, is it actually possible to identify certain regions in the course of the negotiations by the parties in Geneva where people can feel particularly safe?

This is not about influencing the matter from the outside; it is something that needs to come out of the process itself. Because we have tens of thousands of refugees along the Turkish-Syrian border; we have to send a message to them. There are other regions also where one might think of that. Well, the cease-fire in—as a whole needs to be put in place, but these are areas where there is a particular obligation incumbent upon all the different parties where, for example, humanitarian access can guarantee, where the people don't have to have the impression they have to flee this particular area, as well, have again to go to Turkey or to other areas. But it needs to be part and parcel of the Geneva negotiating process, and not something that comes sort of out of the blue.

Mr. Seibert. Kristina Dunz from Deutsche Presse-Agentur, German Press Agency.

Syria/German-U.S. Relations/North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Q. Madam Chancellor, Mr. President, this is presumably your last joint sort of visit, or appearance, rather, here in Germany during your term. If you were to draw stock, what were your best experiences and what were your worst—between Medal of Freedom and NSA affair—if I may call it that?

And, Madam Chancellor, the United States actually wants Germany to do more as regards its military presence within NATO. Are you ready to increase, for example, soldiers and the contingent in order to achieve a deterrence via Russia in the east by locating ground troops

there? And should the United States not help more by absorbing, for example, more than 10,000 refugees from Syria this year? And will you see to it that from G-7 in Japan, a G-8 process will evolve over time?

Chancellor Merkel. I have the impression that we're actually quite busy with the conflicts that we need to solve in the world as of today. And we have new tasks all the time on our agenda, so I am not in a position to draw stock now. What you see is a testimony to our close partnership and cooperation and friendship based on mutual trust. And I'm very grateful for this because it helps us to solve international issues.

Germany—if I look at the term of office of President Barack Obama—in many instances has become a more active partner, I think one can safely say, because we are also threatened, our very own security is threatened, and we realize that we cannot ensure this on our own. We have to do this in our alliance.

In certain areas, we have shouldered a long-term mission that we're going to continue. If I look at Afghanistan, for example, in a way we've had a change of paradigm in the sense that we see this challenge of IS as something that is very acute. So we send weapons into a conflict area. We gave them to the Peshmerga, a completely new step compared to our past policies.

Looking at terrorist threat against France, for example, we've shouldered responsibility in a mission in Northern Africa, which is also a new thing—well, leaving the Congo mission aside where we spent some time.

But if we meet in Germany, if we meet at G-7 or again in Warsaw, we shall have other opportunities to meet, the President and I. We shall address all of these issues. So let me say, for me, the future with the President is much more important than the past right now.

We know that we obviously have to make additional efforts as regards our possibilities to defend ourselves. We have to put in more equipment, more personnel. We know the targets that NATO has submitted to us. We think that the whole positioning of our federal armed forces reflects fully the—our sense that we need to shoulder this international responsibility, also, as regards, for example, cyber threats, something that we've neglected to do over the past years. And I think that helps. It helps us to tackle the challenges and to master them. And the cooperation with the United States is indispensable.

Looking at the larger neighborhood of Europe, transatlantic cooperation within NATO, but also in other fora is absolutely essential for maintaining our own security and safety.

President Obama. Very briefly, I want to go back to Roberta's point. As Chancellor Merkel mentioned, part of the notion of a cessation of hostilities is that the parties to the conflict would carve out areas in which, because the opposition is a signatory to that cessation, the regime agrees not to attack those areas. And she's exactly right. And here there's no space between us—that if we can get the political transition to separate out areas where a moderate opposition that's at the table controls it, that should be a safe area. If it's ISIL or Nusra, that's not a safe area. And that's the concept that we've been trying to build.

Now, it's been framed in part because the Syrian regime has been cheating, in part because there are areas where Nusra and moderate opposition forces both reside and it's been difficult to separate them geographically. But that concept of ultimately bringing some safety and security within the country is entirely consistent with what we're trying to do in our negotiations.

Now, with respect to the U.S.-German relationship and my relationship with Chancellor Merkel, I've said this before, I will repeat: This is as important a relationship as I've had during the course of my Presidency. Chancellor Merkel has been consistent. She has been steady. She is trustworthy. She has a really good sense of humor that she doesn't show all the time at press conferences. [Laughter] She's a little more—she's much more serious in front of all of you—[laughter]. And—which probably serves her well. That's why she's been such a long-lasting leader, because she watches what she says.

But if you think about the first time I came here, we were in the midst of a potential collapse of the global economy. And I believe that it was in large part because of our joint leadership, because of Europe and the United States and other partners around the world coming together and having a clear vision, that we were able to stabilize the global financial system. And our two countries now have been able to grow steadily and reduce unemployment and recovered much better than a number of other countries around the world.

When you think about the Paris accord, that doesn't happen unless there's strong U.S.-German cooperation, and making sure that we are arresting the pace of climate change is as important as any issue that we're going to face in the decades to come. Making sure that we're able to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon without resort to war, that occurred because of the partnership of the P-5-plus-1 and the leadership that Angela and others have shown.

In Afghanistan, German troops have been vital in us assisting Afghans to defend their own country. In Ukraine, the Normandy process, I think, fair—it's fair to say, works in part because the United States stands shoulder to shoulder with Angela and President Hollande to draw a very firm line about the basic principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty.

So there's not an issue in which we've worked together where I have not been hugely appreciative of Angela's steady leadership and trustworthiness. And as she noted, although it's true that I will be saying goodbye from this current position in around 9 months, a lot happens in 9 months. Everybody kept on saying to me originally that somehow things would slow down in the second half of my last term. It hasn't happened yet. [Laughter] I seem to be pretty busy. And I look forward—in addressing many of the challenges that we face, including those that we'll discuss at NATO, those that we'll discuss at the G-7, those that we'll discuss at the G-20—to know that I have a strong partner in Angela Merkel.

Last point I would make, with respect to European defense spending. I think it is absolutely true that, under Angela's leadership, Germany has been more forward leaning on a whole variety of areas.

I do continue to maintain—and I will say this leading up to the NATO conference and beyond—that given the pressures both from the south and the aggressive posture and enormous spending that we're seeing out of Russia, it is important for all of our NATO members to try to hit the target that we set in Wales of 2 percent of defense spending so that everyone is able to maintain the kind of defense capacity—in part to prevent wars—not necessarily to initiate them, but to be in a position where we can send a strong signal that we can meet our alliance obligations and deal with these new and rapidly emerging challenges that confront Europe, as well as the world.

Press Secretary Earnest. The second U.S. journalist that we'll recognize is Colleen McCain Nelson from the Wall Street Journal.

North Korea

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. North Korea launched a ballistic missile from a submarine on Saturday. Later, North Korea's Foreign Minister told the AP that they will halt its nuclear tests if the U.S. suspends its military exercises with South Korea. Do you view that as a serious overture? And at this point, how do you assess North Korea's nuclear capabilities?

And to Chancellor Merkel, you both have spoken about the strong working relationship that the two of you have. As you look ahead to 2017 and the end of President Obama's term, how do you view the possibility of working with a new U.S. President who has called your refugee policy "insane" and has raised the specter of dissolving NATO? *[Laughter]*

President Obama. I—*[laughter]*. So, with respect to North Korea, we're still analyzing and assessing with precision the activities that North Korea engaged in over the last several days. So I'll let the Pentagon and our intelligence community debrief everyone once this—we have precise information.

What is clear is that North Korea continues to engage in continuous, provocative behavior; that they have been actively pursuing a nuclear program, an ability to launch nuclear weapons. And although more often than not they fail in many of these tests, they gain knowledge each time they engage in these tests. And we take it very seriously. And so do our allies, and so does the entire world.

And it's for this reason why we have continually mobilized the international community to isolate North Korea, to crank up the sanctions that impose a cost on Kim Jong Un and Pyongyang, and why we've cultivated cooperation with the Chinese to put more pressure on North Korea. And although it is not where we would completely like it to be, I will say that we've seen the Chinese be more alarmed and take more seriously what North Korea is doing, and they have been willing to be more forward leaning in exacting a price on North Korea's destructive behavior.

In terms of overtures, we don't take seriously a promise to simply halt—until the next time they decide to do a test—these kinds of activities. What we've said consistently, dating back to the six-party talks, is that if North Korea shows seriousness in denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula, then we will be prepared to enter into some serious conversations with them about reducing tensions and our approach to protecting our allies in the region. But that's not something that happens based on a press release in the wake of a series of provocative behaviors. They're going to have to do better than that.

And until they do, we're going to continue to emphasize our work with the Republic of Korea and Japan and our missile defense mechanisms to assure that we're keeping the American people safe and our—we're keeping our allies safe.

Chancellor Merkel. As to your question, let me make two remarks. First, I concentrate on the task ahead for 2016. I'm quite busy with that, thank you very much. And I'm looking with great interest at the American election campaign. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Seibert. The one last question is going to come from Nico Fried from the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

Libya/Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership/U.S. Presidency/European Migration Crisis

Q. Madam Chancellor, the President, a few days ago, said that it was a grave mistake not to have had a plan after the intervention in Libya ready. Do you think—feel confirmed by the

fact that you abstained from that? And do you feel that you are actually sufficiently supported after this—in your policies after this decision was taken?

And, Mr. President, in Germany, there is very great resistance against particularly those private dispute settlement schemes in T-TIP. And what—are you going to accommodate the Germans? And are you actually envious of the Chancellor that her term of office is actually unlimited, according to our Constitution, compared to yours? *[Laughter]*

Chancellor Merkel. Actually, but you—*[laughter]*—I was interested—I was so, listening so interestingly—*[laughter]*—because I always have this 6 o'clock at the back of my mind. What was your question? Oh, yes, on Libya.

Q. Do you feel confirmed by the decision you've taken. *[Laughter]*

Chancellor Merkel. Well, if you take a decision that is different from the decision that one of your friends is taking—it was an abstention at the time—it's never easy, but you still remain friends, and it still remains your joined goal that you're pursuing. Now, what's on the agenda now is something that's affecting us, it's affecting the United States of America, and it's affecting everyone. We need to build up a functioning state in Libya, which is anything but easy. That's why we're working so closely and with such commitment in trying to—strengthening this unity Government, and that's why we're trying to cooperate internationally in order to bring about this goal and not have different goals that we pursue.

So, basically, let's look ahead. Let's look at what we want to achieve. Let's try and stabilize this country. It's not easy, not at all, because they have a tribal structure in Libya. They have a very—well, a history very much their own. They have a situation there on the ground that is such that they have never had a national army, never had a functioning state as we know it. So that's everything—all of these things come into the equation—we have to think of when we try to stabilize the country, when we try to strengthen the population there. And we do this together with the United States.

President Obama. First, with respect to Libya, just to—I want to be very clear: I continue to believe that it was the right thing to do for us to intervene as part of a U.N.-mandated international coalition to prevent some of the potentially murderous behavior that Qaddafi was talking about. I do believe that it was important for us to properly plan, prepare, and resource what came next. And I think it was possible for us to do that effectively. I think that we didn't do it as effectively as we should have.

That does not negate, though, as Angela said, the importance of us all now investing in making sure that there's a functioning Libyan Government. And the fact that we now have a Government of National Accord, fragile as it is, requires us to do everything we can to encourage it. And this is a conversation I've had throughout my meetings during this trip, whether in Riyadh or London or now here.

With respect to the T-TIP negotiations, what you're seeing is differences continually narrowing. And I think it's up to the negotiators to try to find compromises and solutions on all these issues.

The issue of dispute settlement is something that has gained a lot of attention and attraction among those who generally oppose trade agreements. Keep in mind that the vast majority of trade agreements already contain such dispute resolution mechanisms. And the terrible scenarios that are painted in which suddenly corporations are going around suing countries so that they are not able to enforce their public health laws or their financial

regulations or their environmental laws, none of these things have happened with the many trade agreements that currently exist and that Germany and the United States and the EU and others are already a party to.

So I think it's important for us to look at the facts and not a bunch of hypothetical pronouncements. And the fact is that, for example, in the Trans-Pacific Partnership that we've negotiated, you have countries that right now have very few labor rights that now are required to have labor rights and, by the way, can be enforced by workers, the same way that corporations have. You have environmental provisions that now are fully enforceable and that raise standards in countries that may not even have, up until this point, any serious environmental laws in place.

And so if you look point by point, the issue is not whether or not there is going to be trade. The issue is going to be, under what terms. And I believe that countries like the United States, countries like Germany, that already have high standards, that already make sure that how businesses operate are not completely based on profit, but are also based on the common good, that that improves rather than detracts from the kinds of progressive goals that brought me into office in the first place. Otherwise, I wouldn't support these laws.

And with respect to your last question, I do not envy Angela Merkel—[laughter]—for not having term limits. I've said this before. I love this job. It is an extraordinary privilege, and I wake up every day knowing that what I do matters, and that I can help somebody somewhere, both inside the United States and around the world, make the world a little safer, a little more prosperous, help some child get an education, help some disease get cured. It is an extraordinary privilege.

But I have come to appreciate, at least in the United States, the wisdom of our Founders. I think it's healthy for a big, diverse country like ours to have some turnover—to use a phrase from basketball, some fresh legs to come in and—or to use another sports analogy, that I run my portion of the race and then I pass the baton to the next person. And my goal between now and the time I leave is to make sure that when I turn over the keys to my office, that the desk is clean, and if the world is not completely tidy, that at least it's significantly better off than the way I found it.

Now, having said that, I'm glad Angela is still sticking around—[laughter]—because I think the world benefits from her steady presence. And she is to be admired for her remarkable endurance. And I'll—as a private citizen, I will continue to admire her and appreciate the work that she's doing.

By the way, what's happening with respect to her position on refugees here in Europe, she is on the right side of history on this. And for her to take on some very tough politics in order to express not just a humanitarian concern, but also a practical concern, that in this globalized world, it is very difficult for us to simply build walls, she is giving voice, I think, to the kinds of principles that bring people together rather than divide them. And I'm very proud of her for that. And I'm proud of the German people for that.

All right. Thank you very much.

Chancellor Merkel. Danke schoen.

President Obama. Danke schoen.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 5 p.m. in the L'Orangery at Schloss Herrenhausen. In his remarks, the President referred to President François Hollande of France; Prime Minister David W.D. Cameron of the United Kingdom; Prime Minister Matteo Renzi of Italy; President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia; and Supreme Commander Kim Jong Un of North Korea. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization, also known as IS. A reporter referred to Minister of Foreign Affairs Ri Su Yong of North Korea; and Donald J. Trump, chairman and chief executive officer, Trump Organization, in his capacity as a Republican Presidential candidate. Chancellor Merkel, Mr. Seibert, and some reporters spoke in German, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Joint news conferences :: Germany, Chancellor Merkel.

Locations: Hannover, Germany.

Names: Cameron, David W.D.; Hollande, François; Kim Jong Un; Merkel, Angela; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Renzi, Matteo.

Subjects: Afghanistan : Afghan military and security forces; Afghanistan : Former regime ; Belgium : Terrorist attacks in Brussels; California : 2015 terrorist attack in San Bernardino; Commerce, international : Environmental protection standards; Commerce, international : Free and fair trade; Commerce, international : Global financial markets :: Stabilization efforts; Commerce, international : Group of Seven (G-7) nations; Commerce, international : Group of Twenty (G-20) nations; Commerce, international : Labor protection standards; Communications : News media, Presidential interviews; Elections : 2016 Presidential and congressional elections; Environment : Paris Agreement; Europe : Baltic States, security cooperation with U.S.; Europe : Middle Eastern and North African refugees, humanitarian situation; Europe : Trade with U.S.; Europe : Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP); France : 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris; France : President; Germany : Chancellor; Germany : Counterterrorism efforts, cooperation with U.S.; Germany : Hannover Messe trade fair in Hannover; Germany : President Obama's visit; Germany : Relations with U.S.; Germany : Trade with U.S.; Iran : Nuclear program, Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action; Iraq : Iraqi military and security forces; Italy : Prime Minister; Libya : Democracy efforts; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; North Korea : China, role; North Korea : International and U.S. sanctions; North Korea : Nuclear weapons development; North Korea : Six-party talks; North Korea : Supreme Commander; Russia : International and U.S. sanctions; Russia : President; Syria : Civil war and sectarian conflict; Syria : Jabhat al-Nusra insurgent organization; Syria : Refugees, humanitarian situation; Terrorism : Al Qaida terrorist organization; Terrorism : Counterterrorism efforts; Terrorism : Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP); Turkey : Syrian refugees, humanitarian situation; Turkey : Terrorist attacks in Istanbul; Ukraine : Democracy efforts; United Kingdom : Prime Minister.

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